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ABSTRACT

Written by a kindergarten teacher in a school for blind children, the booklet is designed to give parents insights and guidelines to help prepare their visually handicapped child for school. Part I reviews characteristics of learning. Part II focuses on how children learn. A third section, which makes up most of the document, offers guidelines in the following areas: sensory awareness: language: body image: self care skills (eating, dressing, lacing, putting away clothes, toilet training, washing, sleeping): gross motor abilities: small muscle abilities: planned motor training: orientation and mobility: learning to play: and use of remaining vision. A final section offers suggestions for behavior management and includes a bibliography. (SBH)

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Get Ready, Get Set, Go.

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS OF
VISUALLY IMPAIRED CHILDREN

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illustrated by:
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FOREWORD

I am a kindergarten teacher in a school for blind children. Each child comes to me with his/her unique strengths and weaknesses, and quickly shows me the extent of sensory experiences during the early years. My purpose for writing this booklet is to impress upon you, as parents and caregivers, that a child's early experiences have a direct influence on how competent your child will become later on. Blindness is a serious impairment, but need not be a handicap. In order to avoid the "handicap" aspect of blindness, your child needs extra help, coupled with much understanding and patience, to develop his/her individual learning potential.

I need your help and support, as does your child. You are your child's first teachers. You also will continue to "teach" long after I am out of the picture. Let's work together. On these pages, I will try to give you some insights and guidelines to help prepare your child for school. Many of these hints I have gathered from other parents of visually impaired children. You are the people who will set standards of behavior for your child; give the security of belonging; show approval, love and discipline; as well as instill respect for authority.

You are the ones who prepare your child to <u>GET READY, GET SET, AND GO</u> into the exciting, learning years of school.

Jeanette Schuch

Michigan School for
the Blind, 1980

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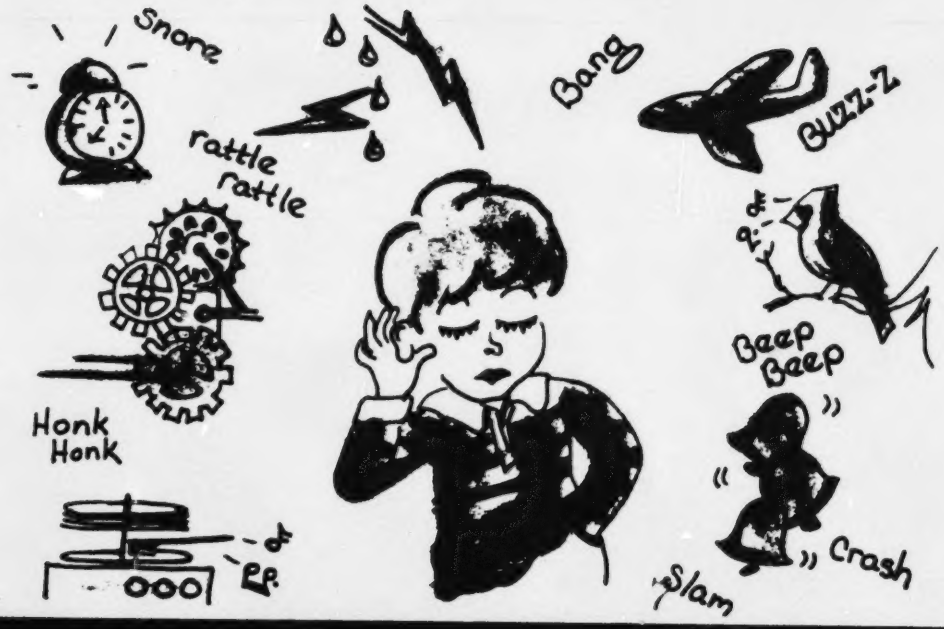
PART I

learning



LEARNING BEGINS AT BIRTH

Children start learning immediately after birth. This means that the time for parents to start teaching their child is from the very beginning. Learning does not begin in Kindergarten. For some kinds of learning, the beginning of school may be too late.

LEARNING IS AN EVERYDAY AFFAIR

Teaching and learning are everyday affairs. You parents have a very important role in seeing that your child learns day-to-day routine activities and for providing continuous practice that is necessary for establishing habits. Learning takes place best in an accepting, loving atmosphere.

To start school on a firm foundation of early experiences, the child needs meaningful experiences in his personal and daily life skills, such as how to eat, dress, walk, talk and toilet. Special children need to learn basic life skills, as we all do, through experience. This means that a child's everyday living experiences need to be LEARNING EXPERIENCES.

LEARNING IS SEQUENTIAL AND BUILDS UPON PAST EXPERIENCES

The preschool years are very important for a child's mental, physical and social growth. Development in all areas is cumulative and proceeds in a sequential, orderly fashion. Each new learning joins and interacts with past knowledge, providing a basis for more advanced learning by your child. READINESS for learning comes after many kinds of experiences rather than automatically with age. Included in that experience should be: social awareness, language, motor control, manipulation of objects, and the ability to remember experiences. Soon the child will be seeing relationships, remembering the sequence of events and noticing similarities and differences.

LEARNING IS DEPENDENT ON LISTENING

The visually impaired child needs to be taught to listen, recognize sounds and attach meaning to sounds and words. Trained listening for the child follows the following sequence: 1. awareness of sounds 2. recognition of sounds 3. identification of sounds 4. discrimination of sounds 5. localization of sounds 6. use of sound clues to determine presence, distance, and direction.

Activities and games that may help develop skills in listening for enjoyment and appreciation may include:

1. "Find It". Child looks for object while someone claps loudly when the child is getting close to the object and softly when moving away.
2. Tap on different objects and identify source of sound: wood, metal, pencil, cowbell, deskbell.
3. Good music, records and tapes.
4. Poetry, stories, or nonsensical limericks read to the child.
5. Interpreting indoor environmental sounds: knock on door, door opening, door bell, running water in bath or toilet, radio, kitchen appliances, familiar footsteps.
6. Interpreting out-of-door environmental sounds: bus, train, birds, dogs, lawn mower, power tools.
7. Tapes of above sounds to listen and interpret later.
8. Adult and child make vocal sounds for stories: funny, scary, spooky, happy.
9. Talk about loud-soft, slow-fast, high-low voices.
10. Stand to high tone and sit to low note on piano.

LEARNING IN KINDERGARTEN IS DEPENDENT ON READINESS

A kindergarten program for a blind child is skillfully built around six different areas: 1. Concept formation 2. Communication and language 3. Social-emotional growth 4. Physical training 5. Personal living and self-help skills 6. Enrichment activities. To be successful in these areas, the child must have received readiness activities during the preschool years.

Some readiness experiences can be encouraged in nursery school programs, but home is the essential place for continuous learning. Should you decide to place your preschool child in one of the many nursery or preschool programs, it should involve parent participation, as fully as possible. Because DISCIPLINE AND CONSISTENCY are crucial in child rearing, parents have a basic right and need to communicate all their child's needs effectively between themselves and any other person involved with their child's learning.

LEARNING IS DEPENDENT ON DISCIPLINE WITH AFFECTION

It has been reported in research studies that a child's experiences during the first few years of life have a direct influence on how competent she will be later on. Parents who are most effective in educating their children are generally firm and effective disciplinarians, while at the same time showing great affection in responding to the child with help, comfort or shared enthusiasm.

Discipline is an important part of learning. It is an essential preparation for adjusting to the world, preparing for school, and making a happier child. A positive approach, "Do this_____.", is better than a negative statement, "Don't do _____."

Discipline which is firm and consistent helps mold and direct a child's development. It allows the child to grow in an acceptable way. It may be difficult for parents to discipline a handicapped child, but the "spoiled" child hurts not only her own life, but that of other family members. The longer a child is permitted to "rule the roost," the more difficult it is to change this behavior. The child then has a social, as well as a physical, handicap. The goal of discipline is to help a child learn her own limits and eventually to enforce those limits internally.

Punishment, if necessary, should be designed to fit the child and vary with the offense. Be sure you "punish the behavior," not the child. Punishment should follow immediately after the offense. Punishment should be of short duration. It should clear the air.

LEARNING IS AFFECTED BY ATTITUDES OF OTHERS

Parental attitudes are important in the total development of a child. Children base their attitudes about themselves (and happenings) upon those of the people who are most significant to them. For the visually impaired child, the tone of voice of others is an important transmitter of feelings and attitudes.

Parents of impaired children sometimes find they need to critically examine their attitudes toward their child. Special treatment often results in overprotection and can have an effect on other children in the family. Of course, all children are treated differently, but this difference should be based on age and functioning level. Visually impaired children are more like other children than different.

One of the most important principles of childrearing is to love abundantly and care sincerely about children. Love must be shown to make your child aware of its presence. All humans need strokes, both verbal and physical. Close physical contact is not always easy to achieve. Some children are not easy to hold, but the outcomes of love, shown through contact, as well as words, include feelings of worth, self-respect, self-confidence and security.

It is not easy to let children go, especially if they have special needs. There will be times when you must let the child take risks, to go out alone. Part of being a parent is living through those experiences and staying close enough to "pick up the pieces." Too much protection prevents a child from learning about personal limitations and from learning about expectations of others outside the immediate family.

LEARNING IS DEPENDENT ON ROUTINE AND CONSISTENCY

Routine and consistency are important in all our everyday lives. Adhering to a daily routine is an important skill necessary for adequate classroom preparation and functioning. With a child, this begins with a basic set of self-care and housekeeping duties, and progresses through to rules and prescribed activities. For a young child, a ROUTINE makes it easier for him to learn. Decide on a routine and try to stay with it.

Parents should expect appropriate behavior and respect for family rules from all family members. All children (visually impaired or sighted) will test family rules and parent limits. If you set limits and enforce them, you are providing children with the CONSISTENCY needed, and at the same time showing your love. It is important for children to have someone in control when needed. Children will learn when parents mean business if they are consistent. Do not say "no" too often, but when you do, mean it.

PART II

how children learn

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HOW CHILDREN LEARN: ATTEND AND FOCUS,
SHORT TEACHING PERIODS, IMITATION,
PRAISE

Your child needs to ATTEND and FOCUS --

Before learning can take place, the child must ATTEND and FOCUS. Be sure when you make requests to your child that you have his attention. This can be done by calling the child by name, touching, or by moving a light or sound source to get initial attention. At first use simple, clear sentences. Speaking at a slower rate of speed to young children is often helpful. Use simple, one step commands, and in the beginning it may be necessary for the child to repeat what is said. Then progress to using two or three step commands to increase concentration and memory.

Your child needs SHORT TEACHING PERIODS --

Because a young child has a short attention span, work for short periods of time and repeat the pattern as many different times as necessary. This will hold the child's interest and prevent frustration. You gain little if you become angry and try to force the child. Remember Grandma's Rule:"Try, try again." If it is an important learning task, it is worth the effort.

Your child needs to IMITATE --

Your feelings will be reflected by your child. One of the most successful teaching methods is IMITATION. Copying, imitating, or modeling are terms to describe a child's behavior when it is similar to that of a model. Children at all stages of cognitive, social and emotional development imitate peers and adults. Care must be taken around your child as inappropriate behavior may also be modeled. Visually impaired children may not be able to imitate visually, but they certainly model you in every other way.

Your child needs PRAISE --

Praise your child for what he does. Even when he does not succeed, praise him for trying. Trying comes first. The child will not learn if he is not willing to try. Encourage him to keep trying. Always praise with words. You may want to reward with food, water, toys or tickles, but always use words of approval first.

Strive to develop pride in your child - pride in self and appropriate behavior. Talk to and praise your child Let him know he is an important person by your words and tone of voice.

What happens to the child at the time of performing an action is very important. If your child likes what happens he is REWARDED. Everyone will repeat actions that bring personal reward.

PART III

your child needs to be taught

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YOUR CHILD NEEDS TO BE TAUGHT SENSORY AWARENESS

Sensory training involves developing your child's ability to differentiate between the various sensory experiences by means of touch, sight, hearing, smell, and taste. Sensory development includes perception, or "awareness of objects," and the meaning the child attaches to those things. Blindness distorts, delays, and interferes with accuracy of perception. The child may perceive only parts of the possible information. Learning through the senses comes only through repeated contacts.

You, as parents, can help your visually impaired infant become aware of the world and persons and objects in it by:

1. Massaging your baby with various textures. Doing this can prevent tactual defensiveness, develop body awareness and body image, and stimulate movement patterns. Young blind babies move their legs freely, but may not move their arms and hands as much as a sighted child unless they are stimulated to do so.
2. Beginning early to keep your visually impaired baby close to you and involved in household activities. Get a lightweight baby carrier and keep the baby with you, or place the baby in a small seat near you during waking hours. Let your child experience different body positions as you hold the child in a variety of ways.
3. Letting your child feel the sources of the noises that are in the environment. Help him reach for and hold the things making those noises.

4. Keeping in close touch, physically or verbally. Your child needs to know where you are.
5. Talking to your child as much as possible about what is happening. Stimulation accompanied by dialog is important during the first year. Sing songs as you bounce the baby or touch different body parts.

YOUR CHILD NEEDS TO DEVELOP MEANINGFUL LANGUAGE

Language begins with sensory experiences and grows as a result of social interaction with other people. A baby needs to be sung and talked to. As your child gets older, you must continue to talk and use language to describe objects you are handling, your actions, and the reasons for doing things.

Use correct speech with short, but complete and clear sentences. Let your child feel or see objects as you talk about them. This helps to connect sight, sound, and/or touch with the object or the action; making language concrete.

When speaking to your child, help him to attend. Try to be near or close to his eye level so he can focus attention and/or any vision on you as a speaker or on the object spoken about. If your child is totally blind, clue him of your presence. Let him feel you are near. Do not startle him.

When your child knows and understands what is happening, he develops a sense of confidence and trust. He will look forward to activities he remembers and will want to talk about them. Language weaves together all learning.

YOUR CHILD NEEDS TO DEVELOP A GOOD BODY IMAGE

BODY IMAGE is the recognition of the parts of the body and how they function. It involves the ability of the child to know WHO she is and HOW to move through space efficiently. How a child feels about herself and how others react to her is an important factor in your child's development. How a child perceives herself affects her behavior and serves as a frame of reference by which all experiences are understood, evaluated, and accepted or not accepted. The use of your child's name helps to develop a "self image" and an understanding of "ME." From a very early age, talk to your child, not about her. Her feelings about herself have a lot to do with you.

An important aspect of BODY IMAGE or SELF CONCEPT or IDENTITY involves discovering and identifying body parts. The order of difficulty is progressive, from easy to more difficult: mouth, nose, feet, hair, hands, ear, head, legs, arms, fingers, toes, stomach, back, knee, teeth, heels, fingernails, chin, front and side. Learning body parts can be a game -- a part of everyday living.

The developmental progression of learning about body parts begins with an AWARENESS. Begin at birth to massage your child's limbs with textures to develop awareness of different parts and to prevent tactual defensiveness. Talk about the parts, name them, and describe how they move. When you are bathing your child say, "This is your leg. Mommy is washing your leg." Later the child should learn to IDENTIFY and indicate a body part on request, "Time to take your bath. Hold up your leg so I can wash it." Finally, the child becomes able to name a body part which is touched by the parent, "I'm washing you all over. What am I washing now?"

Activities to help develop awareness of body parts:

--Put foam or paper inside body suit or shirt for the child to feel while exercising.
--Put objects inside clothing and ask the child to remove them.
--Put tape on different parts of body. Ask the child to remove the tape.
--Wind yarn or rope on the child's body. Ask the child to unwind the yarn.
--Ask your child to roll back and forth and name the body part touching the floor.
--Allow child to lie on a water bed or jump on a trampoline.
--Play finger plays calling for body parts: "Simon Says," "Ten Little Fingers," "This Little Piggy," and "Loobie Loo."
--Ask child to nod, clap, kick, and wave.

In order for your child to know her world in a meaningful way, she must have a stable "point of reference." This means knowing the body parts and being able to move in relation to objects in space.

Activities to help develop awareness of body parts to other people and objects:

--Ask your child to touch her body parts to body parts of others (hand to knee)
--Ask your child to touch and name parts of dolls or animals.
--Ask your child to touch body parts to objects (elbow on table).
--Have your child walk around with bare feet on floor, rug, gravel, grass.
--Have two children play in small space, jump together holding hands, stand face-to-face or back-to-back and talk about positions.
--Have your child move through an obstacle course (see motor area).

To help your child understand basic concepts of the relationship of body to surrounding space, begin teaching in a small area. A medium-sized box is ideal. This experience provides a reference point for the child's body to an object and gives tactual information for teaching words such as: up, down, ceiling, wall, front, back, above, etc. These words can later be used in a room with four walls. More advanced concepts of space include directions (right, left) and compass words (north, south, east and west).

POSTURE is vitally important for a visually impaired individual if she is to develop a good body image, profit adequately from pre-orientation and orientation activities, develop adequate mobility skills, and be accepted socially.

Encourage your child to hold her head erect while sitting, standing and walking. Before using the word "straight", demonstrate it by having her stand against a doorway or wall, so she can get the feeling of "straight." When sitting, encourage your child to sit up with her back touching the chair and with her feet on the floor.

YOUR CHILD NEEDS TO DEVELOP SELF CARE SKILLS IN EATING, DRESSING, TOILET TRAINING AND HANDWASHING

Self-help or self-care is the ability to take care of personal needs. Most of early learning falls into this category. Self-care is the most important step in your child's move to independence. It is best learned at the normally appropriate time of day in the normally appropriate place. These skills include: eating, dressing, toileting, washing and grooming. Success and mastery in these areas help your child's self-esteem and are big steps toward self-reliance.

With guidance from parents, all children can begin to care for themselves in the preschool years. Decide on a routine and try to stay with it. First, observe your child's behavior. What can he already do? Be aware that readiness skills are necessary for success. The most basic readiness skills include: grasping objects, sitting, standing, following commands, coordination of body movements, and hand dexterity.

As you observe, you may want to make a list of all the things you do for your child, which the child can learn to do. Then decide what you want to teach first. Initially, do not work on teaching too many things at one time. If you break down any skill to be learned into small tasks, you will not spend too long a period teaching. Do not let your child drop an activity once it is learned. Have him practice and continue to perform the task in other places. Gradually add new tasks. Help your child form a habit.

When working with your child, get into a comfortable position either in front, back, or beside. Help your child as much as needed with HAND-OVER-HAND grasp. Talk about what you are doing. When you feel the child try to do any part of the activity by himself, loosen your hold on your child's hand. If he stops or hesitates while performing the task, tighten your grasp on his hand as you continue to help with the activity. Guide until your child tries again. Continue this cycle until the child can go through the entire activity with your hands only lightly touching.

When your child is able to do more of the task independently, you can move your grasp to slightly above the WRIST. Use the same procedure as in HAND-OVER-HAND; when you feel the child try to move independently, let him do so. If your child stops or hesitates, continue guiding from the wrist until you feel your child continue with the task.

The next step is to move your hand to the ELBOW. Tap gently as a reminder if there is hesitation or no activity. This gradual withdrawal of your support from hand, to wrist, to elbow with a slight tap will encourage independence while still offering guidance and help when he needs it.

Don't hurry. Progress may be slow, especially at first. Learning takes time. Remember, each small step in learning is really a giant step for your child. Praise him for trying. Do not get discouraged in your efforts. If one plan or approach does not work, try another. Once is not enough. Be a problem solver.

EATING

Eating should be as pleasurable an experience as possible for everyone concerned. Teaching will be easier if the child is ready and enough time is allowed so meals are not rushed. It is a complex task and takes patience.

Learning to eat involves physical, social, mental and emotional considerations. You must observe your child in all these areas to determine functioning level. The PHYSICAL behavior is influenced by structure and functioning of the child's mouth and teeth, his head and body balance, fine motor grasp, release and wrist rotation as well as visual, tactual, and auditory abilities. The MENTAL behavior includes the language abilities and memory functioning. The SOCIAL behavior takes in interaction with you as a feeder, adaptive abilities, and table manners (neatness and speed). The EMOTIONAL ASPECT of eating includes the enjoyment or non-enjoyment of eating, likes and dislikes, and how your child expresses feelings and desires. In eating we see the integration of all the described areas.

When eating, it is important that your child be in a chair that fits and gives proper support. Your child should be able to hold up his head, hold food in his mouth, and chew. Chewing and swallowing requires a certain level of maturity. Let your child feel your jaw as you chew in order to feel the up and down action of chewing.

Eating with his hands is the first step in self-feeding; it establishes the hand to mouth pattern. The visually impaired child will need to learn about food through touch as each new food is introduced -- even things like mashed potatoes and eggs. Watch to see that "learning about" does not change to "playing with."

SPOON

While your child is still being fed and/or finger feeding, occasionally place a spoon in your child's hand. Encouraging your child to use the spoon as early as possible helps him acquire later skills.

The following procedure may help you train the child in self-spoon feeding:

1. Get behind the child.
2. Place the spoon in the dominant hand. It may be easier to hold if tape is placed around the handle to enlarge the grip area.
3. Initially place your hand on top of your child's hand for scooping.
4. Allow the HAND-OVER-HAND procedure discussed earlier in teaching tasks until the child gets the spoon to mouth and back to plate for scooping with minimal or no prompt. The child may need to use the other hand to help secure the food into the spoon. Later, you might suggest a piece of bread as a better pusher.

FORK

When your child has adequately accomplished the task of spoon feeding, make an attempt to introduce the fork. When the time comes, use the same procedure that was used for learning to use the spoon with these suggestions:

1. Guide the hand as before in learning the HAND-OVER-HAND TO SPEAR.
2. Use chunks of food which are soft, such as cheese, to begin spearing.
3. Encourage use of the index finger of the other hand to locate food and guide chunks of food toward the fork.

DRINK

Begin with a cup with handles and a lid. Later a soft plastic glass, narrow enough for your child to get his hands around, will help make it easier to learn how to drink. Your child may need to use two hands to hold the glass at first. Glass glasses are most common and should be introduced so the child can transfer learning to new situations.

PLACEMENT OF FOOD ON PLATE

If your child has no vision, help him to use hands to find the plate and touch the food. Do not allow playing in the food, but do let your child identify it by touch. It might help to place the food in the same place for each meal. You could put the meat on the right, the vegetable on the left, and the salad and bread above this. When food is in the same place, it will be easier to find.

KNIFE

Learning to use a knife for cutting and spreading is a complex task and requires many prerequisite abilities before it can be done correctly. Some of the things your child must be able to do in order to use a knife include:

1. Ability to do different things with each hand at the same time.
2. Ability to hold a tool in one hand while performing a task with the other.
3. Ability to attend and concentrate on the activity.
4. Be able to work at the mid-line (front of body) and perform a task.
5. Be able to cross the mid-line as needed.
6. Be able to know and understand words like: hold with this hand, bring together, pull, push, press down, etc.

Using the same procedure stated in HAND-OVER-HAND, begin by having your child spread butter on toast or hard crackers. Talk about what you are doing. Later you can assist in cutting by holding food with one hand and cutting with the other. Your child will need much practice before he will be able to manipulate a knife and fork together. Cutting practice can be fun when done with clay or play dough and a knife.

POUR FROM A PITCHER

Your child will need lots of practice before he is able to pour liquid from a pitcher. Let him practice during play by pouring different textures such as rice, sand, sugar or water from a variety of containers. Show your child how to pour with one hand while placing the forefinger of the other hand in the cup as a clue of level of liquid being poured. Some children know from auditory clues when a container is full.

MANNERS IN EATING

Teach your child good table manners so you will all be comfortable eating away from home. Provide varied opportunities to practice eating skills. Practice is more meaningful when it occurs in different situations -- birthday parties, dinner at grandma's, MacDonalds, and that special dinner at the restaurant. These opportunities help to encourage many social skills.

Another item to consider is lunch in day school programs. Whether your child will eat a hot lunch or a sack lunch, he will face the tasks of opening cellophane wrappers on crackers, cupcakes, potato chips, as well as turning thermos tops and opening milk cartons. These skills can be worked on in the same manner as suggested in other eating areas. You must teach the child by guiding his hands repeatedly until the task is understood and fine motor manipulation developed. If sandwiches cause your child difficulty in biting and chewing, it might be best to cut the crust from the bread until this process is learned.

The suggestions for eating are only guidelines. If your child is not ready for a task, do not force, but encourage and patiently try again later.

DRESSING

Undressing comes first. Self-care in dressing starts by taking off things like socks and mittens. Dress your child in clothing loose enough to take off easily. Help HAND-OVER-HAND with just enough assistance to avoid frustration.

Teaching your child to dress is best done if it is taught at the time and place that the activity is done regularly each day. Follow the same pattern in dressing consistently each time. For example, put the underpants on first, then shirt, then pants, etc. Have the clothes arranged in a logical order. Let your child know where the clothes are stored; teach him to put away and find clothes. Clothing should be identified with tactual clues for personal identification. Pins, knots of thread, small circles of texture material, or metal tags from the American Foundation of the Blind can be placed in one area of your child's garments. This helps your child to identify ownership, become independent, and use the clue for matching outfits.

While working on dressing and undressing with your child talk about the names of articles of clothing and body parts that the clothing covers. Talk about colors, the feeling of the materials of clothing, and what you are doing as you assist your child.

Dressing includes putting on pants, shirts, coats, socks, shoes, mittens or gloves. It also includes the more difficult skills closing snaps, zippers, buttons, hooks, laces, and ties. To help him learn the steps involved, provide him with specific verbal directions, for example:

BUTTONING: "Hold the button in one hand. Put it in the hole. Push the button through and pull it with your other hand."

ZIPPING: "Hold the zipper pin in the (right or left) hand. Put the pin in the carriage on the other side. Push the pin down. Hold the bottom of the coat. Pull the zipper up."

Each task can be broken down into smaller steps and taught one small part at a time. Observe the task your child is doing, try to do it yourself, note each step, and try to analyze where your child is having difficulty. For example, removing and putting on pants can include the following:

1. unzip zipper
2. unhook hook or unsnap snap
3. push pants down
4. pull one leg out of pant leg
5. pull other leg out of pant leg
6. grab waist of trouser
7. put one leg in pant leg
8. pull pant leg over foot
9. put second leg in pant leg
10. pull pant leg over second foot
11. stand up
12. pull up pants
13. hook or fasten button
14. zip zipper

Steps can be eliminated by substituting simpler clothing (i.e. pants with elastic waists instead of pants with zippers) for younger or multiply handicapped children.

LACING

Lacing is difficult. A child needs lots of practice to develop the necessary finger, wrist and hand dexterity. Provide play with ropes and cords first as you talk and perform actions involving concepts like "in" and "around." Have your child try lacing on large "daddy" shoes before working on smaller shoes. Here is a verse which I use with my youngsters in school when we practice on a play shoe or when working HAND-OVER-HAND on their shoes:

Criss-cross
The one on top goes under
Make a bow
Round we go
Push it through
Pull the two.

PUTTING AWAY CLOTHING

Teach your child to hang up coats and hats. Provide a hook that is the proper height. Provide practice putting coats on hangers. Encourage your child to keep shoes and boots in one place.

TOILET TRAINING

Before you begin toilet training, determine your child's pattern of elimination. Find out the pattern by frequent checking and write it down. After a few days, a pattern will be evident. If she is dry for periods of about two hours, she is ready for training. Put your child on the potty or toilet seat during the times the chart shows; she may have success. Don't let your child sit too long. Praise the child for cooperation; accept accidents matter-of-factly. Use this session as a practice time for dressing and hand washing. Have your child dressed in easy to manage clothing.

The skills in toileting can be broken down so you will be able to pinpoint problem areas. Chart and then work on each area separately. Success will occur in very small steps at first. Once the child is aware of the need to use the bathroom, you can begin to work on the entire toileting procedure. Toilet training your child may be a long process. Take one step at a time.

In addition to the goal of elimination in the toilet, other toilet training goals which lead to full independence in the bathroom include:

1. find the bathroom
2. enter the bathroom
3. find the toilet
4. pull down pants
5. sit on toilet
6. use toilet
7. reach for paper
8. roll out paper
9. tear off paper
10. fold paper
11. clean self
12. drop paper in toilet
13. stand up
14. locate toilet handle
15. flush toilet
16. pull up pants
17. fasten waist of pants
18. pull top over waist
19. find sink
20. wash hands
21. leave bathroom.

WASHING

The same type of analysis as was done with toilet training can be done with handwashing, facewashing, tooth-brushing and other grooming. Break down each task to small steps and observe where your child is having difficulty.

SLEEPING

It is easy for a child who cannot see to turn night into day because daylight offers no stimulus for the blind child to wake up and to stay awake. Try to keep your child active enough during daylight hours to insure the need for rest at night. Avoid letting your child sleep longer than necessary during the day. You may wish to cut out daytime naps so your child will sleep better and longer at night. A consistent routine for getting up, bedtime and other daily activities can often help a child learn differences between day and night. Medication to induce sleep should only be used under a doctor's direction.

YOUR CHILD NEEDS TO DEVELOP GROSS MOTOR ABILITIES

Motor development and coordination refer to your child's ability to perform muscular activities with skill and balance. Like other areas of development, motor development begins in the first weeks of life and is interrelated with other areas of learning. Hearing, vision, muscle movement, touching, smelling, and tasting provide information and motivation for your child to learn to control the body. Again development has a sequential order: head roll, head lift, head lift and body roll, arm and leg movements, bilateral movements, body roll, leg roll, sitting, creeping and walking.

After your child has learned to sit, creep and walk, many activities can be introduced to strengthen these skills: roll, sit-ups, hand and knee rock, crab walk, leg exercises, twist, bend, seat walk, knee walk, arm walk, stoop, squat, climb, throw, stretch, catch, balance, jump, hop, skip, and march. Movement activities provide a natural opportunity to talk to your child about what you are doing and encourage language development in your child.

A young handicapped child needs several short motor training sessions each day. He needs to be encouraged to get the exercise a sighted child is motivated to do independently.

Some of the techniques used to teach self-help skills can be used to teach motor patterns. Work behind or close by while you move with your child so he can experience the motion of the motor action. Talk in a positive tone about what you are doing. If the child is tired or uncooperative, stop. Make the lesson fun for both of you, and try to end the session on a "happy note".

YOUR CHILD NEEDS TO USE SMALL MUSCLES, TOO

Fine motor development refers to the ability to use small hand muscles to manipulate objects. The ability to perform many hand skills is dependent on maturation. However, it is very important that parents encourage tactile exploration from a young age. Many visually impaired youngsters hesitate to use their hands actively. This deprives the children of many opportunities to practice skills as maturation occurs. Here are some activities to encourage awareness of hands and grasping.

1. Using a brush, lotion or vibrator on the fingers and hands
2. Talking about the hands and fingers in daily activities
3. Pointing and touching your child's hands frequently
4. Shining a flashlight over the hands
5. Winding string through the fingers and allowing the child to pull it off
6. Placing thimbles or finger puppets on the child's fingers
7. Blowing on child's fingers to attract attention to them
8. Covering a wall with textured materials to explore with hands

There is a sequential order in the development of hand use. A child is born with a reflexive grasp; a few months later, the hands are primarily open and relaxed. The first grasping comes by palming and squeezing. Later the child learns to grasp more efficiently by using the fingers in opposition to the thumb. During this process, the child learns that two hands work better than one, joins them in the center of his body (midline), and passes the object back and forth.

Now your child is not satisfied just with getting objects, but wants to know how they work. After grasping comes manipulating, which can be encouraged with these activities:

1. Pick up objects with thumb and forefinger
2. Feed himself with fingers (put chocolate or jam on hands to encourage hand-to-mouth action)
3. Poke with index finger (play dough or clay)
4. Clap hands together
5. Wave bye-bye
6. Play patty-cake

A next step in hand use is learning to let go of objects at will. During this stage, your child will need to practice putting objects in and out of containers and putting one block on top of another. This combination of grasp and release requires much practice.

Some hand activities develop tactual awareness and discrimination:

1. Tearing paper
2. Crumbling and folding paper of different types and textures
3. Handling and pouring sand, cereal, and rice, and flour
4. Dipping hands in warm wax and permitting the child to remove the wax as it cools
5. Pasting seeds and textures (rice, popcorn, leaves, egg shells) on cardboard

Continually encourage your child to use his hands in everyday activities, such as to opening and closing doors, drawers, car doors, and manipulating simple tools such as eggbeaters, knives and peelers. Let him help with simple household chores such as setting the table.

Games to have fun and encourage hand use:

FIND ONE LIKE ME

Put 3 or 4 different shapes in a small bag. Give the child a shape the same as one that is in the bag and ask him to reach in and feel all the shapes to find one like the sample.

WHICH ONE IS DIFFERENT

Put a group of objects in a bag where all are alike except one. Ask the child to find the one which is not the same. Talk about why it is different.

A SUGGESTED LIST OF TOYS AND EQUIPMENT for pre-school age children includes some hand made and some ordered or purchased:

balls of various textures
cradle gym
rattles
rubber blocks or balls with bells inside
squeeky rubber toys
blocks
old alarm clock
old telephone not in use
triangle
music box
Tom-tom
drum
color cones
paper carton with rope handle
peg board set
swing
teeter-totter
keys on rings
nested boxes
small aluminum pie plate
bean bags
modeling clay
baking dough
small wagon
tricycle
friction drive toys
large puncho
climbing board
large barrel and boxes

PLANNED MOTOR TRAINING (Obstacle Course)

A visually impaired child needs extra help to develop patterns of movement. Experiences in movement can help develop muscle memory which results when movement is repeated often enough so that it becomes automatic. Motor memory and motor planning accumulate and carry over to many everyday skills. In order to move with more assurance, the blind child will rely on this memory more than the sighted child. One way to provide a structured area for repeated experiences in movement is to provide an OBSTACLE COURSE.

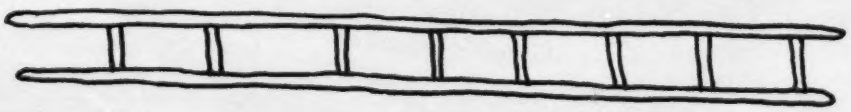
An obstacle course is made from several different pieces of play equipment linked together so there is a challenge to find different ways of getting from one end to the other. It can be set up in the home, basement or out-of-doors. It can be made from old tires to climb over, under or through; chairs, tables, stools, ladders, heavy boxes and barrels. A ladder, plank or home-made walking beam can be used in a simple obstacle course and, depending on your directions or the child's imagination, it can be constructed with more complexity. The child may be requested to carry a pail, transport objects, move in different motor patterns, or sing while traveling through the course.

At first, set up the course with only a few pieces and in a simple pattern. Pieces can later be changed for variety and complexity as the child increases in skill. Children often like to have the same order of pieces so they can anticipate and plan ahead.

The obstacle course can provide mental practice by repeating previous patterns and asking, "Do you remember what comes next?" "Can you name the pieces in the course?" "Can you think of another way to make an obstacle course?" It can also provide language use: high-low, up-down, above-below, under-over, more-less, in-out, before-after, heavy-light, big-small, etc.

SOME EQUIPMENT AND ACTIVITIES FOR OBSTACLE COURSE

LADDER: an 8 foot straight ladder.



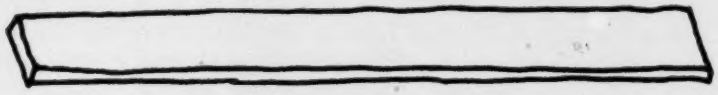
ACTIVITIES:

A. Level - flat on floor
   - raised level supported by blocks, stairs, etc.
   1. Step on rungs, crawl or creep forward or backward
   2. Step between rungs.
   3. Scoot between rungs
   4. Monkey walk.
   5. Turn ladder sideways and crawl through ladder.

6. Raised ladder, varied heights (still level - child climbs over rungs or does any of above)
7. Place ladder on top of any elevated equipment (may be climbing box, climbing equipment or another ladder). Child can swing across as on a trapeze.
8. Plank board may be placed underneath at slant.

B. Raised or slanted
1. Place ladder against wall, climb up and down.
2. Place ladder against or up to an area for exploring.
3. Do any of the above or have the child climb underneath while the ladder is on a slant.

PLANK: a 1" x 11 1/2" x 8" plank

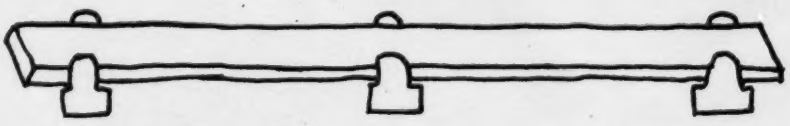


ACTIVITIES:

A. Level - level on floor
- supported by blocks, stairs, crawlbox, etc.
1. Scoot legs up forward, backward
2. Scoot legs in straddle position
3. Crawl
4. Walk
5. Walk on knees
6. Monkey walk
7. Drag body on stomach
8. Drag body on back
9. Scoot sideways
10. Place chair or block under plank. How will child respond?

B. Slanted - steep or gentle slope supported by blocks, stairs, crawlbox, etc.
1. Do any of the above.
2. Combine ladder and plank for varied activities.

WALKING BEAM: a 2" x 4" x 8' beam



ACTIVITIES:
1. Crawl forward or backward.
2. Scoot forward or backward.
3. Walk forward on beam, arms held sideways.
4. Walk backward on beam, arms held sideways.
5. With arms held sideways walk to middle, turn and go backward.
6. Walk forward with hands on hips.
7. Walk sideways with hands on hips.
8. Walk backwards with hands on hips.
9. Walk forward or backward holding an object.
10. Walk sideways either to the right or to the left.
11. Try combinations of the above one forward and another back to start.

YOUR CHILD NEEDS EVERYDAY ATTENTION TO ORIENTATION AND MOBILITY

Basic ORIENTATION and MOBILITY are important for the visually impaired child's independence. ORIENTATION is the process of being aware of one's position in the environment and using senses to locate objects. MOBILITY is the ability to move safely and comfortably from one place to another in the environment. Early movement and mobility training are important for a child's self-concept.

Orientation training starts when the child is born. Listening for sounds is important in mobility. Your child needs to be encouraged if she is not naturally motivated to explore. This begins in the crib and extends to the playpen, her room, the yard, the block and the neighborhood. Encourage independent movement. When your child bumps into things while walking, check to see if she knows what the objects are. Help your child to understand that everything does not move from her path. Take walks and talk about directions. Talk about the block, the street, the curb, the sidewalk and corners. Use directional words such as right, left, behind, beside, and end of the block.

Your visually impaired child needs time and encouragement to explore the world beyond her reach. She needs to develop a mental map. She needs to explore, move, and enjoy the feeling of space. DON'T OVERPROTECT YOUR CHILD. It is important that your child learn about space while she is still young.

Provide a home environment where your child is free to explore, learn and move about on her own. With shoes on or off, she can be encouraged to travel and play on different textures. Keep floor areas clear of small dangerous toys. Your child will learn to avoid larger objects; you can encourage independent travel by walking ahead of your child and having her follow your voice.

YOUR CHILD NEEDS TO LEARN TO PLAY

Sighted children learn to play by watching other children. Visually impaired children cannot do this. Their lack of vision traps them in their own world unless you teach them to play. Play helps a child develop socially, physically and emotionally.

Social interaction is an important part of play and proceeds in stages as the child grows and learns. In a developmental sequence, each child goes from "I" to "We" during the progression of play. At first the child plays alone and tends to keep at a distance or be an ONLOOKER. Gradually your child will allow others to play near-by, without interacting. This is called PARALLEL play. This will grow into ASSOCIATIVE PLAY if the children are attracted to the same activity and share toys. As the child becomes older he is capable of COOPERATIVE PLAY which includes planning and rules. Play is an important part of social development.

Play is also a child's means of developing body and mind. Playing is learning. It is learning about objects and people. Many things learned in play help your child in dressing and eating.

Your child can learn to play with many objects found around your home:

--boxes (to nest, to fill, to climb in)
--spoons (to sort, to use as drumstick)
--measuring cups and spoons (to use in sand and water play)
--empty cans (to nest)
--bolts (to sort, to screw)
--spools (to string, to stack)
--large clothing (to sort, dress up, practice buttoning, zipping)
--clothespins (to clip to edge of can)
--sponges (to squeeze, throw)
--pails (to fill with water, sand, to carry)
--coffee cans (to drum on, to fill, to drop things into, to stack)

Toys are an important part of play. When selecting toys, consider the following:

1. Toys should be simple in form.
2. Push toys are generally more enjoyable than pull toys.
3. Usually a larger toy is selected for a small child, however, select some toys that can be grasped and are small enough to examine.
4. Give only a few toys to the child to play with at a time.
5. Take the child to the store and help choose toys.
6. Avoid exposure to continous use of radio, TV or records.
7. The more realistic the toy is, the better it is.
8. Toys should be pleasant to touch.

TEACH AND DEVELOP USE OF REMAINING VISION

The majority of legally blind children have some vision, but children do vary in degree of residual vision. Early experiences can help train the child to use any remaining sight. Even a small amount of vision helps in travel and independence. Training in visual tracking is important. For an infant, mobiles and objects suspended from the crib stimulate the child to look and touch, encouraging eye-hand movement. Encourage the child to follow a flashlight beam, horizontally, and then vertically across the wall, floor and ceiling of a darkened room. Lights should not be directed into the child's face, but from over his shoulder.

Visually impaired children should be encouraged to use color words with objects; compare sizes; use colored crayons, toys, and paints; play with kaleidoscopes and light pegboards; and look at pictures and books.

Use contrasting colors in your home to accent environmental structures such as doorways, stairs, and edges. Outline indistinct edges with tape or dark marking pencils. Have rugs and walls of different colors. Use texture density cues in the home for judging visual distances. A plaid pattern on the floor gives perspective and color cues of distance.

A partially sighted child has some vision, but is unable to respond to the same stimuli as a sighted child. The child cannot see a smile or a wink or a frown and may miss important cues about people. The partially sighted child may need special help to overcome the visual impairment which gives some, but not all, of the information required to function fully. These children are neither sighted nor blind; problems may arise from misunderstandings and missed visual cues.

PART IV

conclusion

SUGGESTIONS FOR BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT

PARENTING, at its best, is not a simple task; it is easy to become confused and uncertain at times. The important thing to remember is that love must go hand in hand with discipline; indeed, one is not truly possible without the other. In order to love and discipline most effectively, it is necessary to spend constructive time with your child.

The early years of your child's life are the most important. During these years, the base of learning is established. Later, in the educational setting, teachers continue to add onto the learning. It is helpful, during these formative years, to develop rules of behavior and set your standards early by asking yourself, "Would I allow this behavior from any other child?"

Learning to behave appropriately is part of school readiness. Here are some suggestions to keep in mind for general behavior management of your young visually impaired child.

1. Be firm - establish consistent rules. As the child becomes more mature give him more opportunity to express his opinions.
2. Administer discipline in private.
3. Be reasonable and understanding.
4. Do not haggle over the "small stuff."
5. Be a parent "in control" and do not be talked out of what you believe is necessary.
6. Be flexible when necessary.
7. Have a routine or schedule for meals, dressing or bedtime.
8. BE CLEAR. Sometimes a child has disorganized thoughts and difficulty retaining events in proper sequence. If this is true, family members may need to quickly ask, "Who, What, Where and When" questions to help your child get thoughts in order and to gain information. Use a calm, uncritical manner when questioning.
9. Set goals to challenge, but not exceed, your child's capacity.
10. Have other family members recognize and understand the special child's different needs.
11. Do not spoil your child.
12. Encourage your blind child to explore tactually, and provide verbal clues.
13. Help keep your child busy, involved and learning through experiences.
    (a) Encourage your child to question and help in finding answers to questions. Go on walks to many places; encourage curiousity. Help him classify objects and experiences: (i.e. things that are edible, that swim, that live on a farm, or in the city, that have feathers, that fly, that have fur, etc.)
    (b) Make your child aware of likeness and differences through the use of all of his senses.

14. Encourage language by having your child retell or make up stories about experiences he has encountered.
15. Develop a sense of responsibility for self and others by encouraging independence and cooperation.
16. Give your child short assignments or chores. As he matures, expand on those jobs.
17. Help your child wait his turn in playing games or when participating in conversation. Some interruptions may be allowed, but not bad manners.
18. Quickly stop loud, noisy behavior in public.
19. Encourage large and small muscle control. Give him experience in running, skipping, hopping, jumping, skating, bouncing and catching balls, as well as coloring within a form (like yarn or Elmer's glue), cutting, pasting and using tools.
20. DO NOT FORCE YOUR CHILD'S EXPERIENCES. Try to make experiences enjoyable, and then praise your child for every effort.

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